DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 719 FL 025 976

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TITLE	Teaching Learning Strategies to Language Students.
INSTITUTION	Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Center for International Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-12-00
NOTE	27p.; In its: Out of Class Learning Experiences and Students' Perceptions of Their Impact on English Conversation Skills; see FL 025 966.
CONTRACT	P017A50050-95A
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Techniques; *College Instruction; Graduate Students; Higher Education; *Language Teachers; *Learning Strategies; *Second Language Instruction; Teacher Education; *Teaching Assistants

ABSTRACT

An instructional module designed to help prepare college-level teaching assistants (TAs) for their duties in second language instruction is presented. The module focuses on how learning strategies can help students become better language learners, and on methods for sharing the secrets of good language learning with students. Less effective learners can learn how to improve their performance by using appropriate learning strategies. An introductory section summarizes the research basis and rationale for teaching learning strategies to language students. A list of teachable language learning strategies and their definitions follows. A framework and instructional principles for implementing instruction in learning strategies is presented, including sample learning strategy activities that can be adapted for any language. The concluding section summarizes major points and provides suggestions for additional reading. Contains 31 references. (MSE)

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ED 433 719

Teaching Learning Strategies to Language Students

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The George Washington University

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

Grace Stovall Burkart, Editor
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, DC

December 1998

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Prepared under Grant Award No. PO17A50050-95A
Center for International Education
International Research and Studies Program
U.S. Department of Education

FL025976

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Introduction

This module is for foreign language instructors who are interested in finding out how learning strategies can help their students become better language learners. Probably all language teachers have wondered why some of their students leap ahead in language learning while others plod slowly no matter how hard the teacher works to make the language class interesting and enjoyable. Part of this difference between more and less effective language learners may be due to differences in ability, motivation, and/or effort. But an important factor seems to be knowledge about and skill in using "how to learn" techniques—or learning strategies.

Some students may attribute their lack of success in learning a language to an inherent trait such as ability or language aptitude—students may tell us, "I'm just not good at languages." When students have a low estimation of themselves as language learners and use this explanation to account for their lack of success in the language classroom, their negative conviction becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, when teachers can convince such students that their lack of success is due to the *way* they go about language learning rather than to internal forces beyond their control, students generally want to know what they can do to become a better language learner. This is the point at which teachers can demonstrate some of the learning strategies that students might want to learn how to use.

Learning strategies are the thoughts that students have and actions that they can take to assist their comprehension, recall, production, and management of their language learning. For example, a student might use cognates or other clues to guess at the meanings of unfamiliar words in the target language. Or a student might plan in advance for a role play by identifying and practicing some of the key phrases that might be useful for a particular context. Although good language learners are better users of strategies than less effective students in their approach to developing proficiency in a new language, less effective students can learn how to improve their performance by using appropriate learning strategies. This module will explain what you as the teacher can do to share the secrets of good language learners with all of your students.

The next section of this module summarizes the research basis and rationale for teaching learning strategies to language students. Following is a brief section providing a list of teachable language learning strategies and their definitions. This is followed by a section providing a framework and instructional principles for implementing instruction in learning strategies, including sample learning strategies activities which can be adapted for any language. The last section of this module summarizes the major points and following the References, there are some suggestions for additional reading.

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Why Teach Learning Strategies?

The intent of learning strategies instruction is to help all students become better language learners. When students begin to understand their own learning processes and can exert some control over these processes, they tend to take more responsibility for their own learning. This self-knowledge and skill in regulating one's own learning is a characteristic of good learners, including good language learners. Research with both first and second language learners is revealing some of the ways of thinking that guide and assist an individual's attempts to learn more effectively.

Good language learners are more strategic than less effective language learners. By "strategic," I mean that they are better able to figure out the task requirements and are flexible in their approach to solving any problems they encounter while working on the task. Unsuccessful language learners, on the other hand, while not necessarily unaware of strategies, have difficulty in choosing the best strategy for a specific task, and often have a limited variety of strategies in their repertoire.

Students who are more strategic learners are more motivated to learn (Paris, 1988) and have a higher sense of self-efficacy, or confidence in their own learning ability (Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman and Pons, 1986). That is, strategic students perceive themselves as more able to succeed academically than students who do not know how to use strategies effectively. Students who expect to be successful at a learning task generally are successful, and each successful learning experience increases motivation.

In order to continue to be successful with learning tasks, students need to be aware of the strategies that led to their success. Awareness of one's own thinking processes is generally referred to as *metacognition* or *metacognitive awareness*. The value of this type of self-knowledge is that it leads to reflection, to planning how to proceed with a learning task, to monitoring one's own performance on an ongoing basis, and to self-evaluation upon task completion. In other words, it leads to self-regulation of one's learning. Students with greater metacognitive awareness understand the similarity between the current learning task and previous ones, know the strategies required for successful learning, and anticipate success as a result of knowing "how to learn" (Paris and Winograd, 1990).

One study that investigated differences between more and less effective language learners focused on listening comprehension (O'Malley, Chamot, and Küpper, 1989). Significant differences in strategy use were found between good and poor listeners in three major areas. Effective listeners: (1) monitored their comprehension by continually asking themselves if what they were hearing made sense; (2) related new information to their prior knowledge by recalling relevant personal experiences or things they had studied; and (3) made inferences about unknown words or information.

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Similar research with both high school and college foreign language students found differences between more and less effective learners in the number and range of strategies used, in how the strategies were used, and in whether they were appropriate for the task (Chamot, 1993; Chamot and Küpper, 1989).

These studies indicate that task difficulty and level of language proficiency have a major effect on the strategies that students use. For example, some strategies used by beginning level effective language learners are used less often by the same learners when they reach intermediate level classes, probably because they have had to develop new strategies to meet the requirements of more challenging language tasks. In addition, the difficulty of the task seems to be related to whether students even try to use learning strategies. For example, if a task is relatively easy, students can perform it much as they would in their native language, without conscious attention to strategies. On the other hand, if the task is much too difficult, even good learning strategies cannot overcome the learner's lack of knowledge and/or language proficiency.

Conclusions about strategic differences between good and poor language learners suggest that explicit knowledge about the characteristics of a task and about appropriate strategies for the task's completion are major determiners of language learning effectiveness. When students do not understand a task (what they are supposed to do) and cannot choose an appropriate strategy to help them understand and complete the task, they seem to fall back on a largely implicit approach to learning in which they use habitual or preferred strategies without analyzing the requirements of the particular task.

If good language learners know how to use learning strategies to assist their language performance, can teachers help less effective language learners by teaching them how to use some of the same effective strategies?

In fact, researchers and teachers in native language contexts have been quite successful in improving student performance through learning strategy instruction in areas such as reading comprehension, writing, and problem-solving (see, for example, Derry, 1990; El-Dinary, Brown, and Van Meter, 1995; Gagné, Yekovitch, and Yekovitch, 1993; Harris and Graham, 1992; Palincsar and Brown, 1985, 1986; Pressley and Associates, 1990; Pressley and Harris, 1990; Silver and Marshall, 1990; Wood, Woloshyn, and Willoughby, 1995).

Second-language researchers have also investigated a variety of language learning tasks, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing. While much additional research remains to be done with language learning strategies, many of the studies carried out to date report that instruction in learning strategies can, if properly conducted, help students increase their language learning ability and confidence (see, for example, Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura, and Wilson, 1981; Rost and Ross, 1991; Rubin, Quinn, and Enos, 1988; Thompson and Rubin, 1993).

In one study of learners of English as a second language, high school students from various language backgrounds were randomly assigned to a control group or to one of two

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groups receiving different combinations of learning strategies instruction. After two weeks of classroom strategy instruction for about one hour daily, the posttest revealed significant differences favoring the students taught learning strategies for the transactional speaking task (giving a one-minute oral presentation), and significant differences on some of the daily listening comprehension tests (viewing a mini-lecture on video) (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Küpper, 1985).

A similarly designed study was conducted with Arabic-speaking students at a university intensive English program, in which students received different types of strategies instruction for vocabulary learning. On posttest, the group receiving a combination of strategies designed to provide depth of processing through visual, auditory, and semantic associations had a significantly higher rate of recall (Brown and Perry, 1991).

Studies with high school and college learners of Japanese, Russian, or Spanish indicated generally strong correlations between the use of language learning strategies and students' level of confidence in their own language learning ability (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, Carbonaro, and Robbins, 1993; Chamot, Robbins, and El-Dinary, 1993). In addition, most students reported that they found the strategies helpful and teachers indicated that strategies instruction was especially beneficial for average students. Research currently in progress is building on these studies of foreign language learning strategies by fine-tuning teaching techniques for integrating instruction in language learning strategies into the foreign language curriculum.

Important reasons for teaching learning strategies in the second language classroom include the following:

- Strategic differences between more and less effective learners have been documented through research in both first and second language contexts. Better learners have greater metacognitive awareness, which helps them select appropriate strategies for a specific task.
- Most students can learn how to use learning strategies more effectively.
- Many strategies can be used for a variety of tasks, but most students need guidance in transferring a familiar strategy to new problems.
- Learning strategy instruction can increase student motivation in two main ways: by increasing students' confidence in their own learning ability and by providing students with specific techniques for successful language learning.
- Students who have learned how and when to use learning strategies become more self-reliant and better able to learn independently.

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Teachable Learning Strategies

Learning-strategies researchers have generated many lists of strategies reported by students. While there is a great deal of agreement on most of these strategies, there are also differences in strategy names and descriptions. These differences may be related to different disciplines (for example, a math strategy might not be applicable to writing) or simply to different perspectives on the part of researchers. By working on a number of foreign language research studies and observing the classrooms of many different high school and college foreign language teachers, my colleagues and I have identified a set of strategies that teachers can actually teach and that students find useful in learning another language. This set of learning strategies appears in Table 1. (See Table 1 at the end of the text.)

How to Teach Language Learning Strategies

In this section I will suggest some guiding principles for teaching language learning strategies, describe an instructional framework which language teachers have found useful, and provide examples of learning strategies activities that have been field-tested in foreign language classrooms.

Guiding principles

In general, teachers should:

- build on strategies students already use by finding out their current strategies and making students aware of the range of strategies used by their classmates;
- integrate strategy instruction with regular lessons, rather than teaching the strategies separately from language learning activities;
- be explicit—name the strategy, tell students why and how it will help them, and when to use it;
- provide choice by letting students decide which strategies work best for them;
- plan continuous instruction in language learning strategies throughout the course; and
- use the target language as much as possible for strategies instruction.

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Instructional framework

An effective plan for integrating learning strategies instruction into a language curriculum is the framework originally designed for English language learners as the instructional sequence for the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), which integrates content, language, and learning strategies (see Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). This instructional framework consists of five stages: Preparation (eliciting students' prior knowledge about and use of learning strategies); Presentation (introducing new strategies); Practice (active applications of new strategies to language learning tasks); Evaluation (student self-evaluation of the strategies practiced); and Expansion (connecting strategies taught to new tasks and contexts). This is a general sequence that can be modified according to student needs. For example, a teacher might plan to teach two or three strategies for reading comprehension as follows:

1. Preparation: Ask what strategies students are already using when they read—both in English and in the target language. Make a class list.

2. Presentation 1: Model and discuss a reading strategy that most students are not yet using in the target language.

3. Practice 1: Have students practice the strategy with a reading text.

4. Presentation 2: Model and discuss another useful reading strategy that can help students.

5. Practice 2: Have students practice the second strategy with a similar reading text.

6. Evaluation: Ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy and explain reasons for any difficulties they may have had in applying the strategies.

7. Expansion: For homework, have students apply one or both strategies to a different type of reading text (e.g., a newspaper article instead of a story) and report on their experiences in the next class.

This sequence integrates easily with any language lesson. The strategy instruction is explicit, meaning that the teacher discusses the value of learning strategies, gives names to strategies, and explains to students how the strategies can help them and when to use them. There are opportunities for students to practice the strategies, share strategies with classmates, and reflect on the effectiveness of the strategies. Finally, students are provided with opportunities to transfer the strategies to new tasks.

Learning strategy activities

In this section I will share learning strategy activities for each phase of the instructional framework, and then provide a model lesson that exemplifies all five phases. These suggestions are meant to help you get started teaching language learning strategies. Naturally, you will need

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to adapt them to the language and levels you teach and integrate them with the topics in your curriculum.

Sample preparation activities

The purpose of these activities is to help students discover their prior knowledge about language learning strategies. I suggest starting with quite concrete language activities such as vocabulary learning and studying for tests, because virtually all language students have developed some strategies for these tasks.

1. *Vocabulary strategies*. Divide students into pairs or groups of three. Have each group brainstorm their individual techniques for learning vocabulary and record their ideas (in the target language if possible). Then have each group number the vocabulary learning strategies according to usefulness (1= most useful, 2=next most useful, etc.). Compile the results for the class, grouping their strategy descriptions under a strategy name (see Table 1). Ask individual students to explain why the strategies they have chosen are effective for them. If there are disagreements on the usefulness of a particular strategy, encourage students to reflect on possible reasons. (For instance, differences in strategy preferences could be due to the type of vocabulary, the purpose for learning it, and/or the learning style of the individual.)

2. *Test-taking strategies*. When reviewing the results of a test, after each section ask students to describe how they studied for that section and how they decided on the best answer for each question. For example, if the section had grammar exercises, what did students do to understand and apply the grammar paradigms? If the section was a passage to read and answer questions, did students do anything to prepare in advance for increasing their reading comprehension, and how did they operate to understand the selection as they were reading it? If the section involved listening comprehension, how did students prepare and what did they think while listening to the teacher or tape? After the test, a class discussion of the learning strategies reported by different students can inform students about a variety of ways to use test-taking strategies. And the teacher, of course, acquires important information about the students' current approaches to learning.

3. *Interviews and questionnaires*. Other types of preparation activities could include interviews, questionnaires, and journals. For example, you could interview one or more students about their learning strategies immediately after they have completed a learning task. Even better is to videotape a group of students as they are working, then play back the videotape and ask them what they were thinking as they worked (this technique is called stimulated recall).

   Another type of interview is to have students think aloud as they are working on a task. Their thoughts can be noted down by a partner for sharing with the class later on. Thinking aloud about an assignment can also be part of homework. In this case, students are asked to use a tape recorder to record descriptions of their thought processes.

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If students require more guidance to record their current language learning strategies, you can ask them to fill in a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire can include items such as:

1. When I listen to information in [target language] I try to focus on the important ideas, rather than getting hung up on every little word.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

2. When I'm reading in [target language] and I encounter a new word, I try to make an intelligent guess based on the context.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

3. When I'm having a conversation in [target language] and I can't recall the exact word I want, I just substitute a similar word or expression.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

4. When I write something in [target language], I read through it to see if I've expressed my ideas clearly, and I correct any mistakes I may have made.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

The results of interviews and questionnaires can be used to initiate class discussions about the most and least used learning strategies reported, the types of learning strategies reported for each type of task, and reasons why students choose one strategy over another. Finally, if students are keeping journals about their learning experiences you will probably find comments in them that you can respond to by asking, "How did you solve that problem? Can you describe the learning strategy you used?" (See discussion of journals under "Sample evaluation activities.")

Sample presentation activities

The purpose of the presentation phase of learning strategies instruction is to provide students with a clear understanding of why, how, and when language learning strategies can help them. Start by reminding students of the different learning strategies that they reported during the preparation phase. Explain that you would like to show them some strategies that you have found especially helpful with challenging language learning tasks. Tell students that you will think aloud as you do a language task so that they can "see" how you are using the strategies. Here are some suggestions for ways in which you might model strategies for: (1) asking for and listening to directions; (2) reading a folk tale; and (3) writing about a personal experience. Try to do as much of the think-aloud in the target language as possible. You may need to pre-teach

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some of the words you will be using, such as *learning strategy*, *plan*, *monitor*, *evaluate*, and the names of other strategies you plan to demonstrate.

1. *Listening to directions*. Set the scene by describing an instance that you have experienced in asking for directions in the target language. For example, you might tell about an adventure you had as a student in France when you got hopelessly lost because you could not completely understand the directions given to you by the concierge. Then explain how you prepared for your next request for directions and how you negotiated the conversation so that you achieved your goal. Ask one of your students (or another instructor) to take the part of the concierge and provide a script for the concierge's side of the conversation. Think aloud as you *plan*, *monitor*, and *evaluate* your understanding of the directions. Your think-aloud might go something like this:

   "Let's see, I'd better do some *planning* before I even ask for directions. Hmm, maybe I should rehearse the questions I'm going to ask and try to anticipate the types of answers the concierge might give. I should start by asking if the museum is far (she'll probably say that it isn't, even if it really is!), if I can walk there (she'll say 'of course,' since she walks all over Paris), and how long it would take (I'll have to listen carefully here, because if it's more than fifteen minutes I'd rather take the Métro). If it is far, I need a whole new set of questions about which Métro station, changing lines, where to get off..."

   Having completed your planning, begin the role play with the "concierge." Interrupt the conversation from time to time to demonstrate *monitoring* your comprehension and what steps you take when you realize that you are not understanding something the concierge said. For example, you might say in an aside: "Wait a minute—I didn't quite get that. I'd better ask a *question for clarification*." Finally, in order to *evaluate* how well you grasped the directions, you might go over them to the concierge while tracing the route on a map.

   To sum up your presentation of strategies that could be used while listening, ask students to describe what you did, and name each strategy as they describe it. Ask students whether they have used any of the same strategies and to describe other strategies that could have been used.

2. *Reading a folk tale*. Share with students your own interest in this genre and then tell them that you would like to show them some of the strategies you use when reading a folk tale that help you really understand and enjoy it.

   Show an overhead with the title and first illustration of the folk tale. Model your pre-reading strategies. For example, you might say: "The first thing I do is to read the title. [Read it.] Hmm, this title makes me think that maybe this folk tale is about .... Now, let me look at the picture. [Describe the picture—your use of *imagery*.] Well, the picture gives me even more information about the folk tale. It reminds me of [describe your own *prior knowledge* about the topic revealed in the title and picture]. Well, I think this folk tale is going to be about [make a *prediction*]. Now that I've done some *planning*, I'm ready to start reading the story."

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Show an overhead transparency with a paragraph or two of the folk tale (enlarge the type so that students can follow as you read). Model reading the first part of the story. You can read aloud or silently, indicating with your finger or a pointer where you are in the text. Stop when you reach places that present difficulties. Model the strategies you might use to solve these problems. For example, you might say, "Here's a word that I don't know. Let's see if I can make an *inference*—I'll read on to see if the context gives me a clue." As you continue to think aloud, use additional strategies such as *predicting*, *monitoring comprehension* ("Am I understanding this? Does it make sense?"), and *imagery* ("I can make a mental picture of what's happening in the story.").

After modeling for a few minutes, lead a discussion in which students describe the strategies you used. Be sure to name the strategies and explain to students when and how to use them.

3. *Writing about a personal experience*. You can also think aloud to demonstrate to students any aspect of the writing process, including pre-writing, composing, revising, and editing. For example, you can jot down notes or make a semantic map on an overhead transparency as you brainstorm during the pre-writing process. The major strategy you are demonstrating is *planning*, and you will probably also be demonstrating *using prior knowledge* as you recall information and events that you want to include in your writing. As part of *planning*, you will probably set a goal for writing, which will include identifying your audience.

Similarly, you can model composing by thinking aloud as you write on an overhead. The major strategy during composing is *monitoring production* with a focus on meaning rather than form. You might make remarks such as, "Is this what I want to say? Will the reader get my point?"

A number of strategies can be modeled during the revising phase of the writing process. You can demonstrate *cooperation* by asking a student or another instructor to respond constructively to your first draft. Other strategies that could be demonstrated are *planning*, *using prior knowledge*, *imagery*, *using resources*, and *substitution*.

During the editing phase you will continue to model the major strategy of *self-evaluation*, though this time the focus will be on form. An ideal strategy to demonstrate is *selective attention* to specific language mechanics such as agreement, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. As a final *self-evaluation* of the piece of writing, ask yourself, "Did I meet my goal?"

Model the part of the writing process that you wish students to practice (students will be overwhelmed if you try to model the entire process at once). Remember to conclude with a discussion of the strategies students observed, name the strategies, and explain when to use them.

Sample practice activities

After modeling some useful strategies for a particular language activity, have students practice one or two of the strategies with a similar activity. Students can practice the strategies on individual activities, but group activities work especially well. Students can practice using learning strategies with any type of classroom activity or with homework. The practice can be

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as simple as reminding students to use a particular strategy or combination of strategies before they begin an activity, or it can be a structured cooperative learning activity. Following are some examples of practice activities for vocabulary learning, reading comprehension, and role-playing.

1. *Vocabulary classification*. This activity can be done in groups or individually. The learning strategies practiced are *grouping* (or *classification*) and *imagery*. You can use predetermined vocabulary words or, preferably, have students themselves identify the words they need to learn (they will be using *selective attention* when they identify their own vocabulary words). Have students write each word or phrase on a separate card or strip of paper. Ask students to *group* or *classify* their word cards in any way that will facilitate learning. Some students may choose to group their words by semantic or grammatical category, others might group them according to personal criteria such as color or shape, positive, neutral, or negative attributes, etc. Once students have grouped their word cards, ask them to choose a descriptive title for each group and write it (perhaps in color) on a new card and place it on top of the stack of word cards in that category. The title card will serve as the identifier for each group.

   Now (or for homework) have students study one group of word cards at a time and use *imagery* to picture a scene or an event involving all of the words in the group. (Students may make any changes they wish to the composition of each group of word cards.) When satisfied that they have a good mental image involving their words, have them draw and write about the image, integrating the words from the group of word cards. The same procedure is followed with the other groups of vocabulary word cards.

2. *"Reciprocal Teaching" to improve reading comprehension*. Originally developed by Palincsar and Brown (1985), this approach can be adapted for foreign language instruction. In this activity students read a text, working in small groups and taking turns as discussion leader. First, students silently read a portion of the text (from a paragraph to a page, depending on language level). Then, the discussion leader models four reading comprehension strategies by: (1) *summarizing* the passage; (2) *asking questions* of the other group members; (3) *selectively attending* to any areas of difficulty, such as new words or structures; and (4) *predicting* what event or information will follow in the text. I like to add a fifth strategy at the beginning in which the discussion leader elaborates briefly on any personal *prior knowledge* relevant to the text passage.

   After the discussion, the group reads the next section silently and a different student becomes the discussion leader. This continues until each group member has had a turn. The goal of this group practice activity is for students to model effective reading strategies for each other and gain experience in using strategies that they can also use on their own.

3. *Role-playing*. All types of role-playing activities and simulations lend themselves to learning strategies practice. For example, you can provide two or more students with individual role-playing cards. All cards explain the setting of the role-play, such as arriving at a party, ordering in a restaurant, and the like. In addition to information about

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the general setting, each student also receives particular information about the character each is to play. For example, the student playing the role of the guest arriving at the party is supposed to be very dressed up for a formal occasion, quite hungry, and anxious to impress the hosts. The information for the hosts indicates that they are casually dressed, barefoot, and anxious to get rid of the unexpected guest because they are so busy planning for the party, which is the *next* night.

Rather than rushing into the role-play, students should be given some time to practice *planning*. This will entail thinking through what could happen during the conversation (*predicting*) and accessing *prior knowledge* for appropriate greetings, comments, questions, and leave-taking formulas. Students may want to use *resourcing* to look up some of the relevant vocabulary or expressions they cannot immediately recall. Working on *planning* strategies before the role-play will help students become more confident and gain control over an open-ended conversation in the target language.

Subsequent practice sessions can focus on *monitoring* strategies to use during the actual role-play. Students can practice *self-monitoring* both their comprehension ("Did I understand what he just said?") and production ("She's giving me a peculiar look—did I just say something strange?"). When a problem is recognized, students can then try a number of problem-solving strategies such as: *questioning for clarification/verification* when something the other person says is not understood, *substituting* another word when the desired word cannot be remembered, making *inferences* based on context, gestures, and background knowledge; and *self-management* strategies such as changing the topic or using culturally appropriate conversational fillers to buy time to think what to say.

Similar practice activities can be designed for any of the activities described above in the section "Sample presentation activities." For example, students can practice one or more learning strategies during each phase of the writing process.

Sample evaluation activities

Evaluation is an important component of learning strategies instruction. As a teacher, you need to know how well students are using the strategies you have taught, and students also need to evaluate how well individual strategies work for them, which tasks benefit from the use of strategies, and whether they are using appropriate strategies. Activities which allow both evaluation by the teacher and student self-evaluation include class discussions, checklists, learning logs, and journals.

1 *Class discussions*. Discussions on learning strategies can encourage students to describe exactly how they used particular strategies and the results they obtained. If a student says that a learning strategy did not work for the task, ask why and ask other students if the strategy worked for them. You will probably find differences of opinion, which can lead to further discussion. The important thing is to have students reflect on their use of learning strategies and begin to identify their own repertoires of useful strategies. For beginning level students these discussions will need to be in English, but encourage them to use the target language to refer to the strategies themselves. With intermediate and

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advanced level students, you should conduct the learning strategies evaluation discussion completely in the target language.

2. *Learning strategy checklist*. A checklist can be used with all levels of language proficiency, as the checklist items can be written in very simple language (or in English for absolute beginners). Students check off the descriptions of strategies they used during a just-completed task. Examples of checklist items are:

> I focused on key words while I listened. [selective attention]
>
> I used the context to figure out meanings of new words. [inferencing]
>
> I planned what I might say in a role-play by recalling useful words and phrases. [using prior knowledge to plan]
>
> While I was writing I found other ways of expressing my ideas when I couldn't remember the exact words. [substitution]

After students have completed their individual checklists, lead a class discussion in which they share examples of how they used each strategy they checked off.

3. *Learning logs*. Comments on how they used learning strategies can be included in learning logs in which students record their learning progress. For example, after students have written in their logs what they have learned, what they found easy, and what they found difficult, they can respond to prompts such as:

> The learning strategies I used for this task were_____. I decided to use these learning strategies because _____. (Strategy) worked well because _____. (Strategy) did not work very well because _____. Next time I have a task like this, I'll probably use these strategies: _____.

4. *Journals*. Reflections on learning strategies can be kept as a special journal, or students can add thir thoughts about learning strategies to journals they are already keeping. Writing reflective journals helps students understand their own learning processes and decide on the strategies that work best for them. If students are keeping interactive journals with you, then you can use their comments about learning strategies as an assessment of how well they are understanding the concept and how appropriately they are able to use the instructed strategies. These observations, together with comments on your own personal use of learning strategies, can be included as your response to what the students write.

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Sample expansion activities

During the expansion phase of learning strategies instruction, students are asked to transfer the strategies they have been practicing to new tasks and different contexts. Since transfer of strategies to new settings is often difficult, it is important for students to practice transferring strategies as part of their learning strategies instruction. For example, you can ask your students to try out a reading strategy they know, such as *inferencing*, during a listening comprehension task. Then have them explain similarities and differences in using this strategy for each modality. Another strategy expansion activity is to have students use one or more strategies they have learned in their foreign language class in a different class. Again, they should report on the results. A third type of expansion activity is a learning strategies diary. Ask your students to keep a diary for a week in which they describe the learning strategies they use in all aspects of their lives, both academic and social. Keeping a diary helps students understand that learning strategies can be used for any type of task that presents a challenge.

Model lesson

This lesson shows how the instructional framework described above can be used to plan a lesson that includes learning strategies instruction. It is based on an original lesson developed by Esther Ain for her high school Spanish 3 class in Montgomery County, Maryland. The lesson I observed was conducted completely in Spanish and students discussed their learning strategies in the target language.

By the time the lesson is presented, students have already received initial strategy instruction for about three months through teacher modeling, discussion, and practice with the strategies included in this lesson. This is the first time students are asked to put all the reading comprehension strategies together in a single lesson.

* * * * *

Synopsis of *A Letter to God*, by Gregorio López y Fuentes

This story is about Lencho, a poor Mexican farmer whose crop of corn and beans is in desperate need of rain. He and his family are delighted when rain finally comes, but to his horror, the rain changes to enormous hailstones which completely destroy his crops. Lencho and his family are facing hunger and perhaps starvation, and they realize that their only hope is God's help. Although Lencho is a poor peasant, he does know how to write, so that night he writes a letter to God: "God, if you don't help me, I and my whole family will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos to plant again and to live on while the new harvest comes in, because the hail..." He addresses the letter to God and goes to the village post office to buy a stamp and mail his letter.

A post office employee notices the letter, laughs at the address—To God—and takes it to his boss, the Postmaster. He also laughs, but then becomes thoughtful and exclaims: "Faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter! I wish I could believe as he believes! I wish I could be so confident in God!" So the Postmaster decides that the undeliverable letter

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should be answered so as not to disillusion the writer. When he opens the letter, however, he sees that more than good will is needed for the answer. So he takes up a collection from post office employees and his friends, and manages to collect sixty pesos. He puts the money into an envelope with a note that just says "God," and mails it to Lencho.

Lencho goes to the post office the next Sunday to ask if a letter has arrived for him. The post office employee who had received the letter and the Postmaster are both watching for Lencho's reaction to the envelope containing sixty pesos. Lencho doesn't show the least surprise when he opens his letter—he is so confident in God's help—but he becomes angry when he counts the money. He can't believe that God has made a mistake or denied Lencho's request! He asks for paper and a pen, and immediately starts writing another letter. He seals it in an envelope, buys a stamp for it, and pushes it into the mail box. As soon as the letter falls into the mail box, the Postmaster rushes to open it. The letter says:

> God: Of the money I asked you for, only sixty pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I really need it—but don't send it through the post office because the people who work there are a bunch of thieves. —Lencho.

Preparation

1. The teacher provides some background information about the setting and characters of *A Letter to God*. The teacher asks students to predict what the story might be about based on the information given, the title, and their own background knowledge. Students' predictions are recorded on the board. Strategy check: "Why is it a good idea to *predict* what might happen in a story before you start to read?" (Types of answers expected are: predictions help you understand the story better; predicting helps you focus on the story as you read to see if your prediction is correct.)

2. Students work in groups to write down specific things they will pay *selective attention* to as they read. The teacher can assign different categories to each group, for example, one group can brainstorm about names of occupations they expect to find, another can write down adjectives describing people or places, etc. Strategy check: "How does *selective attention* help get you ready to read?" (Types of answers expected are: selective attention helps you remember some of the words or ideas that you will probably find in the story; selective attention gets you ready to focus on the main ideas in the story.)

Presentation

1. The teacher provides each group with a blank transparency and marking pen, and asks students to write headings on their transparencies as shown in Figure 1.

2. Strategy check: Teacher asks students to identify and define the three strategies written on their transparencies.

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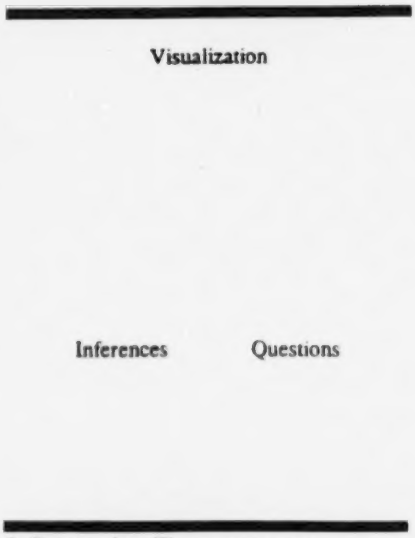
Practice

1. Still in their groups, students read the first section of the story. The students share the *images* each made while reading, and develop a group drawing of their visualization on their transparency.

2. As students encounter new words or phrases, they first try to make *inferences* about the meaning, writing their inferences on the transparency. The group then decides what *questions* they need to ask, and write them on the transparency.



1 Strategies Transparency

Evaluation

1. The teacher places each group's transparency on the overhead projector and asks members of the group to describe their picture (expanding vocabulary as needed), tell how they made their inferences, and ask their questions to the rest of the class.

2. During the discussion of the group transparencies, the teacher probes students' understanding of the text with higher-level (i.e., more cognitively demanding) questions, asks them to predict what might happen next in the story, and has them reflect on how well the strategies worked for them.

Expansion

1. The teacher assigns the next part of the story for students to work on individually (in class or as homework) and complete sentences on a strategies work sheet as follows:

Before reading:

My prediction for this part of the story is...

I will pay selective attention to...

During reading:

My visualization is...

This reminds me of...

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My inferences are...

Questions I want to ask are...

After reading:

My summary of this part of the story:

I checked my prediction. It was...

2. Students can compare their strategies work sheets and develop a class chart of some or all of their responses.

3. The teacher can use the strategies work sheets for informal assessment of students' reading comprehension, use of strategies, and written expression.

This lesson (reproduced here by permission of the author) is based on a Spanish lesson developed by Esther Ain, Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools, as part of the study conducted by the Georgetown University/Center for Applied Linguistics National Foreign Language Resource Center. The lesson plan model (Preparation, Presentation, Practice, Evaluation, and Expansion) is from The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)™, developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley.

* * * * *

Summary

This module has provided information that should help foreign language instructors introduce language learning strategies to their students. I began with a brief review of some of the research on strategic differences between more and less effective language learners and on efforts to teach language students how to learn more efficiently. This research discussion provides a rationale for incorporating learning strategies instruction into foreign language classrooms.

Next I described a fairly small number of learning strategies that are easy to teach and have been helpful to students. Because of the proliferation of strategy names in the literature, I have provided alternative and equivalent strategy names that you might prefer to use. For example, *selective attention* is often referred to as *scanning* when it refers to reading. Though I prefer strategy names that are more inclusive and can refer to more than one language modality, you might want to identify distinct strategy names for listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

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In the last section I considered how to teach learning strategies. This section suggests some guiding principles for language learning strategies instruction, presents an instructional framework, and describes specific activities to teach language learning strategies within the instructional framework. These activities are intended to be used as models and springboards for your own creative instructional ideas, and will, I hope, provide some practical ideas for integrating language learning strategies instruction into your own teaching style. Finally, the model lesson plan provided here is meant to show you how a literature lesson can be enriched through explicit learning strategies instruction.

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Suggested Additional Reading

Chamot, A.U. and J. M. O'Malley. (1994). *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Practical guidelines for integrating content, language, and learning strategies in the second language classroom.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

A rich collection of activities designed to develop learning strategies in each language modality (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

Thompson, I. and J. Rubin. (1995). *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner.* 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Provides language learners with a rationale and specific procedures for applying learning strategies in each language modality.

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Table 1 Language Learning Strategies

Definition: Learning strategies are thoughts or actions that assist learning.

Metacognitive Knowledge and Strategies: Metacognitive knowledge includes awareness of the task demands, of one's own approach to learning and experiences with similar tasks, and of appropriate strategies for the task. Metacognitive strategies are executive processes used to plan, monitor, and evaluate a learning task.

STRATEGY NAME	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION	STRATEGY DEFINITION
Planning		
Advance organization	Preview Skim Gist	Previewing the main ideas and concepts of a text; identifying the organizing principle.
Organizational planning	Plan what to do Outline	Planning how to accomplish the learning task; planning the parts and sequence of ideas to express.
Selective attention	Listen or read selectively Scan Find specific information	Attending to key words, phrases, ideas, linguistic markers, types of information.
Self-management	Plan when, where, and how to study	Seeking or arranging the conditions that help one learn.
Monitoring		
Monitoring comprehension	Think while listening Think while reading	Checking one's comprehension during listening or reading.
Monitoring production	Think while speaking Think while writing	Checking one's oral or written production while it is taking place.
Evaluating		
Self-assessment	Check back Keep a learning log Reflect on what you learned	Judging how well one has accomplished a learning task.

Adapted from Chamot & O'Malley (1994).
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(Table 1 continues on next page)

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Table 1 (continued)

Cognitive Strategies: Interacting with what is to be learned by manipulating it mentally or physically.

STRATEGY NAME	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION	STRATEGY DEFINITION
Resourcing	Use reference materials	Using reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks.
Grouping	Classify Construct graphic organizers	Classifying words, terminology, quantities, or concepts according to their attributes.
Note-taking	Take notes on idea maps, T-lists, semantic webs, etc.	Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form.
Elaboration of prior knowledge	Use what you know Use background knowledge Make analogies	Relating new to known information and making personal associations.
Summarizing	Say or write the main idea	Making a mental, oral, or written summary of information gained from listening or reading.
Deduction/Induction	Use a rule/Make a rule	Applying or figuring out rules to understand a concept or complete a learning task.
Imagery	Visualize Make a picture	Using mental or real pictures to learn new information or solve a problem.
Auditory representation	Use your mental tape recorder Hear it again	Replaying mentally a word, phrase, or piece of information.
Making inferences/Predicting	Use context clues Guess from context Anticipate	Using information in an oral or written text to guess meanings of new items or predict information to come.
Substitution	Paraphrasing Circumlocution	Using a synonym, related term, or descriptive phrase when the exact word cannot be recalled.

Social Affective Strategies: Interacting with other persons or using affective control to assist learning.

STRATEGY NAME	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION	STRATEGY DEFINITION
Questioning for clarification	Ask questions	Getting additional explanation or verification from a teacher or other expert.
Cooperation	Cooperate Work with classmates Coach each other	Working with peers to complete a task, pool information, solve a problem, get feedback.
Self-talk	Think positive! Talk yourself through it	Reducing anxiety by improving one's sense of competence.

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